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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 284, An Act Increasing the Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting written testimony in support of Senate Bill 284, An Act Increasing the Age From Eight to Eighteen Years For an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.

The ACLU-CT believes in equality for all people, no matter where they are from or what they have been subjected to in their past. Immigrants are contributing to our state in a multitude of ways and deserve to be respected and offered help when they need it. Medical care is a human right, so immigration status should have no impact on someone's ability to access healthcare. Senate Bill 284 recognizes and codifies that value.

Noncitizens are significantly more likely to be uninsured than citizens, with an estimated 45 percent of undocumented immigrants being uninsured.¹ Children with at least one noncitizen parent are almost twice as likely to be uninsured as children with two citizen parents.² This could be a contributing factor to the low rate of healthcare utilization by undocumented people—who account for just 1.4 percent of

¹ *Health Coverage of Immigrants*, KAISER FAM. FOUND. (Feb. 15, 2019), available at <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>.

² *Id.*

the total medical expenditures in the U.S., even though they make up approximately 5 percent of the population.³ Clearly, there is a gap between the healthcare needs of immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, and their healthcare access.

Senate Bill 284 is an important step to change these statistics by extending access to medical health assistance for children under nineteen regardless of immigration status. This bill could be expanded, though, by including access to low-income parents and children under HUSKY A irrespective of immigration status. Adding in access for lower-income older people and people with disabilities of every immigration status is an important change, as well, to ensure that HUSKY healthcare truly is available to everyone who is otherwise eligible, regardless of their immigration status.

Healthcare is a right that should be afforded to all people in Connecticut. Immigrants contribute hugely to our state and should not be punished because of their legal status. Accordingly, the ACLU-CT supports Senate Bill 284 and encourages this Committee to support and strengthen the bill.

³ Courtney Hollands, *Do Immigrants Drain the U.S. Health-Care System?*, TUFTS MED. MAG. (2019), available at <https://sites.tufts.edu/medicine/winter-2019/do-immigrants-drain-the-u-s-health-care-system/>.